

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 SYDNEY 00174 190524Z

12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 CCO-00 OTPE-00 FCC-03 OC-06

/053 W

----- 124857

R 190403Z JUL 73

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4727

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

UNCLAS SYDNEY 1747

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, ELAB, AS

SUBJ: N.S.W. ELECTRICAL "BROWNOUT"

SUMMARY:

SINCE JUNE 24, NSW HAS BEEN EXPERIENCING A SHORTAGE OF ELECTRICAL POWER DUE TO A STRIKE BY CERTAIN EMPLOYEES OF THE NSW ELECTRICITY COMMISSION IN THEIR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN A 35-HOUR WEEK. THE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION ARBITRATION HAS RULED AGAINST THESE EMPLOYEES BUT THEY HAVE REFUSED TO ABIDE BY THE DECISION AND PREMIER SIR ROBERT ASKIN HAS REFERRED THE MATTER BACK TO THE COMMISSION FOR FURTHER STUDY. IT IS EXPECTED THAT A COMPROMISE WILL BE WORKED OUT BETWEEN THE UNION MEMBERS AND THE GOVERNMENT AFTER AN UNDETERMINED FUTURE PERIOD OF ELECTRICAL DISRUPTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOR SEVERAL YEARS EMPLOYEES OF THE NSW ELECTRICITY COMMISSION HAVE BEEN DEMANDING A 35-HOUR WORK WEEK FOR ALL OF THEIR MEMBERS. ALTHOUGH OVER 70 PERCENT OF THE EMPLOYEES WERE GRANTED A 35-HOUR WEEK SOME TWO YEARS AGO, THOSE INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION OF GENERATING PLANTS HAVE NEVER RECEIVED THIS AWARD. THE GOVERNMENT OF PREMIER ASKIN HAS

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 SYDNEY 00174 190524Z

ADAMANTLY REFUSED EVEN TO NEGOTIATE ON THIS POINT

AND AFTER HEARING BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION WHICH HELD FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND AGAINST THE UNION MEMBERS, THE UNION DECIDED ON A CURTAILMENT OF ELECTRICAL POWER.

2. ON JUNE 24, 1973 ELECTRICITY COMMISSION EMPLOYEES DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION LIMITING DAILY ELECTRICAL OUTPUT TO 4100 MEGAWATTS. PREMIER ASKIN THEN DECIDED TO LIMIT THE USE OF ELECTRICITY BY INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND RESIDENTS IN ORDER TO AVOID A COMPLETE BLACKOUT IN NSW DUE TO POWER OVERLOADING THE USE OF INDUSTRIAL POWER WAS PROHIBITED DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF THE STRIKE AND WHEN THE LOCAL CONSUMPTION LEVEL WAS WELL BELOW THE 4100 MEGAWATT LIMIT, AN EASING OF THE BAN WAS ORDERED AND SINCE JULY 1 INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE USERS HAVE ONLY BEEN LIMITED TO HALF POWER USE BETWEEN 7-9 AM AND 4:30-8:30 PM., THE PRIME ELECTRICAL USE HOURS. THESE USE RULES ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN IN FORCE AS LONG AS THE 4100 MEGAWATT LIMIT IS PLACED ON THE PRODUCTION OF ELECTRICITY IN NSW BY THE UNION EMPLOYEES.

3. A SURVEY OF SEVERAL AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL COMPANIES WAS CONDUCTED TO DETERMINE PRODUCTION LOSS DUE TO THIS LIMIT OF USE OF ELECTRICAL POWER. DURING THE FIRST WEEK WHEN INDUSTRY WAS PROHIBITED ANY USE OF ELECTRICAL POWER (EXCEPT BY THEIR OWN GENERATORS) PRODUCTION WAS CUT BY AS MUCH AS 80 PERCENT. SUBSEQUENTLY WHEN ADDITIONAL POWER WAS ALLOWED, THE SAME COMPANIES HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING ABOUT A 10 PERCENT LOSS OF PRODUCTION. PROBABLY THE COMPANY HURT MOST BY THE ORIGINAL ELECTRICAL LIMIT EDICT WAS AUSTRALIAN GENERAL ELECTRIC, WHO ESTIMATED A LOSS OF A350,000 DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THIS ONE WEEK PERIOD. OTHER COMPANIES SUFFERED LESS DOLLAR LOSS BECAUSE OF THE SMALLER SIZES OF THEIR MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS.

4. THE STRIKING WORKERS HAVE THREATENED TO CUT BACK
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 SYDNEY 00174 190524Z

ELECTRICAL PRODUCTION EVEN MORE UNLESS PREMIER ASKIN AGREES BOTH TO MEET WITH THEM AND TO GRANT THEM THE 35-HOUR WEEK. THE PREMIER'S ANSWER, AFTER A PERIOD OF DISCUSSION WITH HIS MINISTERS, WAS TO REFER THE WHOLE MATTER BACK TO THE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION WITH THE QUESTION TO THE COMMISSION OF HOW THEY WOULD HAVE RULED IF THE 35-HOUR WEEK QUESTION HAD BEEN CONFINED ONLY TO POWER GENERATING EMPLOYEES.

5. POST CONTACTS WITH THE CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES OF NSW AND A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LABOR COUNCIL LEAD TO THE CONCLUSION THAT A GENERAL BLACKOUT OF ELECTRICAL POWER WOULD BE DISASTROUS TO ALL SEGMENTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY AND THAT IN CASE OF COLDER WEATHER IT WOULD LEAD TO A SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEM. EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THIS SEEMED ANXIOUS FOR A SETTLEMENT ALTHOUGH THEY AGREE THAT THE ELECTRICAL DISRUPTION WILL GO ON FOR SOME TIME.

POST COMMENT:

THE ATTITUDE OF THE LABOR COUNCIL OF NSW IS, THAT SINCE 71.8 PERCENT OF THE ELECTRICITY COMMISEION EMPLOYEES ARE PRESENTLY ON 35-HOUR WEEK AND HAVE BEEN FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS, THE GRANTING OF THE 35-HOUR WEEK TO THE REMAINDER OF THEIR EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT APPRECIABLY AFFECT THE COST OF ELECTRICITY AS PREMIER ASKIN AVERS. A LABOR COUNCIL OFFICIAL CLAIMS THAT SIR ROBERT ASKIN IS USING THIS STRIKE IN PREPARATION FOR THE COMING GENERAL ELECTION IN NSW AND THAT ANY SHORTAGE IN NORMAL ELECTRICITY SUPPLY IS POLITICAL TALK AND NOT FACT. PREMIER ASKIN SAYS THE GRANTING OF ADDITIONAL 35-HOUR WEEK AWARDS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE INFLATIONARY TREND BY FORCING AN INCREASE IN ELECTRICAL PRICES. HE ALSO FEARS THAT GRANTING OF THE 35-HOUR WEEK TO THESE EMPLOYEES WOULD PRECIPITATE A GENERAL MOVEMENT AMONG ALL STATE EMPLOYEES FOR A SIMILAR WORK WEEK. HANNAH

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR STRIKES, ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SYDNEY00174
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SYDNEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730722/aaaaaptz.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinml
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01-Nov-2001 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <06-Feb-2002 by martinml>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: N.S.W. ELECTRICAL "BROWNOUT" SUMMARY
TAGS: ETRN, ELAB, AS, NSW
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005